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An attempt to discover whether a voluntary, coordinated activities program in geography in the teachers college could improv preparation for teaching the subject. The project consisted of an evaluation of gains made by geography majors and minors at the West Chester State Teachers College as a result of voluntary participation in various selected activities in geography. The 15 activities chosen for the experiment were ones aimed at developing a geographic photography program, conducting geography field trips, operating a motion picture program of geographic films, constructing visual aids for use in geographic teaching, and other geographic programs of high educational caliber. Eighty-one students who were carrying majors or minors in geography participated in the study. Results indicated that there was considerable evidence showing that the level of learning achieved by students participating in the geography activities was significantly higher than that of a comparable nonparticipating group.

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AN EVALUATION OF A VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES PROGRAM AS AN ENRICHMENT TO THE TEACHING OF GEOGRAPHY FOR PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS

- Alvin S. Keinard
State Teachers College, West Chester, Pa.

This study was an attempt to discover whether a voluntary, co-ordinated activities program in geography in the teachers college could improve the preparation for teaching the subject.

The Problem

The problem forming the basis of this study is threefold:

1. Will realistic experiences through voluntary student activities stimulate and increase interest in the study of geography?

2. Will participation in these activities and their co-ordination with the regular geography courses tend to increase learning of geography among prospective geography teachers?

3. Will co-ordination of the teachers college geography program with that of the public schools of its service area provide a greater incentive for study and increased learning for prospective geography teachers?

Procedure

To ascertain whether an improved program for the preparation of geography teachers can result from the use of various activities of high educational calibre in geography; a series of fifteen student activities was set up at the West Chester State Teachers College, for voluntary participation by the geography majors and minors. These projects were organized and developed by the Geography Professional Club of the College in co-operation with the faculty sponsors of the Club, and were co-ordinated with the regular geography courses. The following is a list of these activities:

1. Tutoring of freshman students.
2. Operating a college weather station.
3. Developing a geographic photography program.
4. Conducting geography field trips.
5. Collecting and classifying rocks and minerals.
6. Giving public school demonstrations on local geography.
7. Operating a motion picture program using geographical films.
8. Holding geography seminars.
9. Developing an urban mapping project.
10. Developing conservation of natural resources projects.
11. Constructing visual aids for use in geography teaching.
12. Corresponding with other geography clubs and organizations.
13. Publishing a newsletter.
14. Planning and holding professional geography meetings.
15. Developing a publicity program to promote interest in geography education.

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A total of eighty-one students who were majoring or minoring in geography at the College became involved in the study. These students were given two diagnostic tests, one at the beginning and the other at the close of the full academic year involved in the geography activities program. A comparison of gains of participants and non-participants in the activities was then made.

Analysis of the Findings

The analyses and interpretations were made with the use of statistical data, observations by the geography staff of the College, and evaluations by the participating college students and co-operating public school teachers.

Comparison of gains of participating and non-participating students was made for some individual activities and for the activities program as a whole. The significance of the difference between the gains of the participating and non-participating groups for the program as a whole was also computed.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

1. There was considerable evidence that the level of learning achieved by students participating in the geography activities was significantly higher than that of a comparative non-participating group. A comparison of mean gains of various groups showed that the students achieved values in proportion to their participation in the activities.

2. Considerable evidence of increased interest in the study of geography was manifested by the participating students.

3. A greater incentive and purposefulness in preparing to teach geography was observed among the activities groups, as compared to the non-activity groups.

Recommendations

1. Conduct a similar study of student activities, following groups of students throughout their four years in college.

2. Conduct a similar study of the effects on learning through the use of a co-ordinated activities program on both the elementary and the secondary school levels.

3. Conduct studies on the effect of activities on learning in other phases of geography, such as the historical and economic aspects of the subject.

4. Conduct studies in teachers colleges located in other geographical areas to determine whether success in learning geography through the use of activities in a general result, or one associated mainly with a particular set of circumstances.

5. Introduce the activity type program and collect evidence over a period of years to see if succeeding classes have similar outcomes.